

Context Sensitive Solutions

Awareness Training for Metropolitan Planning Organizations

November 2006

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Developed by the Michigan Department of Transportation

Cynthia Warzecha, MDOT Transportation Planner and Project Manager

> Lynn Lynwood, MDOT Transportation Landscape Architect



Instructors

Craig Churchward, HNTB Transportation Landscape Architect

Karl Weissenborn, HNTB Transportation Landscape Architect

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CSS AWARENESS TRAINING

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Purpose of Training

- Provide an understanding of CSS principles
- Provide knowledge of when and how to use CSS
- Provide a guide on how local, state, and federal units of government can work together to effectively deliver CSS
- Provide encouragement to practice CSS at a local level









Class Structure

Session 1: Introducing CSS

Session 2: Engaging Stakeholders

Session 3: Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes

Session 5: Understanding Context

Session 6: Using Design Flexibility

Session 7: Applying CSS

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www.michigan.gov/mdot

Click on "Project and Programs" then click on "Context Sensitive Solutions"





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Session 1: Introducing Context Sensitive Solutions







Bronx River Parkway, NY

Cincinnati, OH

Columbia River Gorge, OR

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Session 1: Introducing CSS



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Opening Exercise

- 1. What is your definition of CSS?
- 2. What is your favorite driving experience? Explain why.
- 3. What do you believe is the best example of CSS in your MPO, in Michigan, or the United States? Explain why.

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FHWA & MDOT Definition of CSS:

"A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility."



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Synonyms for Context Sensitive Solutions

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- Thinking Beyond the Pavement
- Context Sensitive Design
- Community Sensitive Design
- Customer Sensitive Solutions
- Common Sense Solutions
- Placemaking
- Engineering Judgment
- Right-Sizing Projects

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Federal Policy

FHWA Administrator Mary Peters in a January 24, 2002 memo challenged her agency . . .

"A transportation facility is an integral part of the community's fabric and it can help define the character of a community or it can destroy it."

"We should seek to institutionalize the principles of CSD with the same commitment that drove the implementation of the Interstate Highway System."



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Dispelling Myths About CSS

CSS is not about . . .

- Compromising safety and standards
- Responding only to the "squeaky wheel"
- Spending more time and money
- Tacking on enhancements

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What is CSS?

More than Mitigation . . .



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What is CSS?

More than Mitigation . . .

More than Enhancements . . .



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What is CSS?

More than Mitigation . . .

More than Enhancements . . .

More than a Fad . . .



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What is CSS?

Essential Principles and Practices

- 1. Engages stakeholders
- 2. Utilizes an interdisciplinary team
- 3. Embraces a multimodal approach
- 4. Serves and respects the environmental and social context of the transportation network
- 5. Provides a safe and efficient transportation system
- 6. Applies to all of the activities of the transportation agency

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What is CSS?

Essential Principles and Practices

- 1. Engages stakeholders Involves stakeholders, builds partnerships, and recognizes community values.
- Uses a wide range of professionals in an integrated approach to get comprehensive results.

2. Utilizes an interdisciplinary team





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What is CSS?

Essential Principles and Practices

- 3. Embraces a multimodal approach Integrates all modes of transportation including pedestrians, bicycles, transit, motor vehicles, trains, ferries, ships, and airplanes.
- 4. Serves and respects its context

Transportation must serve society and respect the constraints and opportunities provided by the natural and cultural environments that form its context.





I-43, Milwaukee, WI

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What is CSS?

Essential Principles and Practices

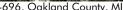
5: Provides a safe and efficient system

Safety and efficiency are a necessary and a primary goal of the transportation system.

6: Applies to all transportation activities

CSS will be applied to all work from planning and design through construction and into operations and maintenance.







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American Road Building Eras

The 19th Century

- Grassroots
- Multimodal

The 20th Century

- Scientific
- Standardization

The 21st Century

- Synthesis of 19th and 20th Centuries
- Context Sensitive Solutions





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Context Sensitive Solutions

- 1998 Thinking Beyond the Pavement workshop
- Introduces the term Context Sensitive Design
- Results in the selection of six pilot agencies





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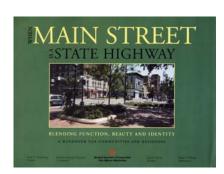




Context Sensitive Solutions

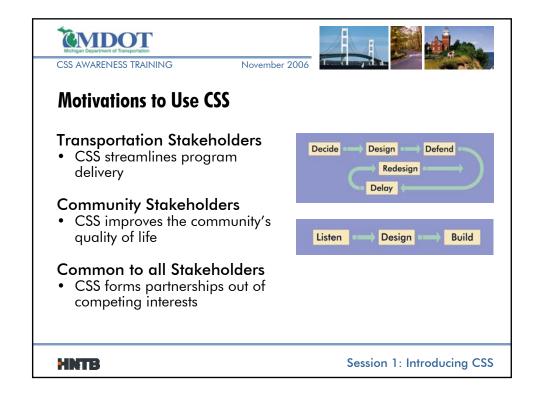
Pilot States and Agencies

- Connecticut DOT
- Kentucky DOT
- Maryland DOT
- Minnesota DOT
- Utah DOT
- FHWA Eastern Federal Lands



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Outcome 1

An Operating Definition

CSS is an interdisciplinary process that engages all stakeholders in planning, designing, constructing, operating and maintaining a safe, effective, and integrated multimodal transportation system that supports a community's vision.





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Outcome 2

An Operating Approach

CSS synthesizes the grassroots and multi-modal approach used by Americans in 19th Century with the scientific rigor they applied to solving transportation issues in the 20th Century. CSS fits our culture, our motivations, and it has been field tested.



US-2 Cut River Bridge, MI

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Outcome 3

An Operating Organization

All levels of government can and should work together to achieve context sensitive solutions, regardless of current jurisdictional boundaries.



Highway 21 Washington County, MN

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Outcome 4

An Operating Vision

Using CSS will increase public support for maintaining and improving Michigan's transportation system.



Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway, MN

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Session 2:

Engaging Stakeholders to Create Context Sensitive Solutions



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Session 2: Engaging Stakeholders



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Engaging Stakeholders

Identify and Invite Stakeholders

- Inclusive
- Early
- Often
- Continuously



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Three Phases of Stakeholder Engagement

Phase 1:

Before Construction — Planning and Design

Phase 2:

Construction

Phase 3:

After Construction — Operations and Maintenance

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Session 2: Engaging Stakeholders



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Engaging Stakeholders Planning and Design

What are the most effective methods you have used to identify stakeholders and incorporate their concerns during planning and design?



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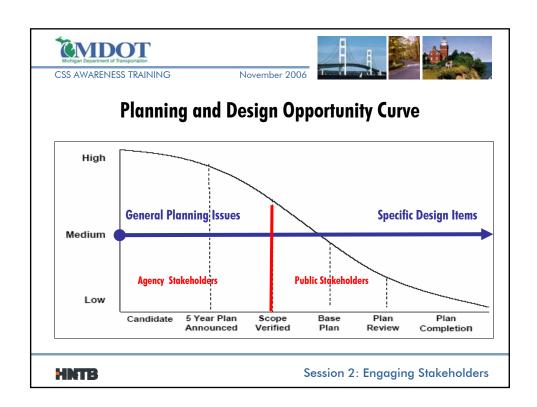


Engaging Stakeholders During Planning and Design

Every community should establish procedures to identify and incorporate stakeholders and their concerns during the planning and design of its transportation system.



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Engaging Stakeholders During Planning and Design

- System Planning Agency stakeholders help define public policies, network needs and requirements, and establish a community vision.
- Program/Corridor Planning –
 Agency stakeholders help determine
 program or corridor goals, project
 priorities and schedule, and find funding
- Project Scoping Agency stakeholders identify project scope, define purpose and need, define public stakeholders.



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Engaging Stakeholders During Planning and Design

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- Preliminary Design Stakeholders verify purpose and need, define and assess alternatives, select a preferred alternative, determine mitigation and enhancement strategies.
- Final Design Stakeholders review
 plans for conformance to purpose and need
 and mitigation and enhancement strategies,
 help make final design and construction
 scheduling decisions, establish cost sharing
 agreements.



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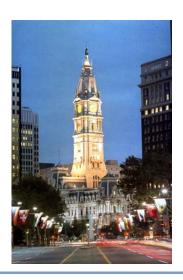


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The MPO Connection to CSS

- Roadway and land use planning are interrelated.
- Land use sets the stage for road design and vice versa.
- Coordinating roadway design with land use planning gives communities control over their appearance, how their roads function, and their quality of life.



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Session 2: Engaging Stakeholders



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MPO Approaches to CSS in Michigan

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

- Focusing on establishing and maintaining a community vision and quality of life
- Creating a land use and community development framework to foster specific transportation development goals
- Coordinating and concentrating investments in public infrastructure



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MPO Approaches to CSS in Michigan

Grand Valley Metro Council

- Form-based code prescribes the visual character of a community, particularly its public realm.
- Land use and road use are coordinated and mutually reinforcing.
- Existing examples of coordinated roads and land uses were identified as ideal models to be followed.





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Engaging Stakeholders During Construction

What are the most effective methods you have used during construction to identify stakeholders and incorporate their concerns?



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Engaging Stakeholders During Construction

Every community should establish procedures to identify and incorporate stakeholders and their concerns during construction.



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Engaging Stakeholders During Construction

- Sustain community businesses and institutions
- Establish clear communications channels especially for emergencies
- Keep public informed about project status, especially changes in schedule, forms, or materials
- Create positive impressions of community



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US-131 S-Curve Replacement in Grand Rapids

- Call-in hot line
- Bussing and park and ride lots
- Media relations
- Newsletters
- Personal visits



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Engaging Stakeholders During Operations & Maintenance

What are the most effective methods you have used to identify stakeholders and incorporate their concerns during operations and maintenance?



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Engaging Stakeholders During Operations & Maintenance

Continue to provide agency contacts, several alternative communication channels, and multiple opportunities for providing community feedback after construction.



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Session 2: Engaging Stakeholders



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Engaging Stakeholders During Operations & Maintenance

- Traffic Management
- Maintenance Activities
- Community Events
- Community Development
- Monitoring Agreements
- Other Feedback Opportunities



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Conclusion – Continuously Engage Stakeholders

Using CSS during planning, design and construction sets the stage and is extremely important in establishing community support. Using a CSS approach during traffic operations and during maintenance activities promotes long-term success.



I-35E, St. Paul, MN

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Session 2: Engaging Stakeholders



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CSS is a bridge on which values are transferred from one side to the other.

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Session 3:

Employing Interdisciplinary Teams for a Context Sensitive Solution

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Session 3: Employing Interdisciplinary Teams



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Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

Who should be on an interdisciplinary team for the planning and design of a community's transportation system?



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Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

- Engineers
- Planners
- Landscape Architects
- Resource Specialists
- Social Scientists
- Economic Analysts
- Budget Administrators



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Session 3: Employing Interdisciplinary Teams



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Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

What is the best example you have of effectively using an interdisciplinary team on any municipal project? Who was on the team? How did it operate?



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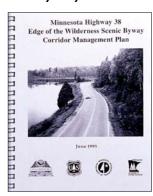
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Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

Example from Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway

- Identical Worksheet
- 22 Resource Teams
- Regulators as designers
- Strong Agency Leadership
- Inter-Agency Leadership Cooperation
- Public Involvement Coordination
- Common Vision Evolved



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Session 3: Employing Interdisciplinary Teams



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Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

What are some techniques that can be used to make an interdisciplinary team perform well?



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Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

- Teams regularly meet together
- Develop ideas together
- Use sketches as minutes
- Written minutes are action items
- Employ shared space (studio, room, or wall)
- Virtual teaming with shared networks
- Teleconferencing



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Session 3: Employing Interdisciplinary Teams



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Conclusion – Employing Interdisciplinary Teams

An interdisciplinary team:

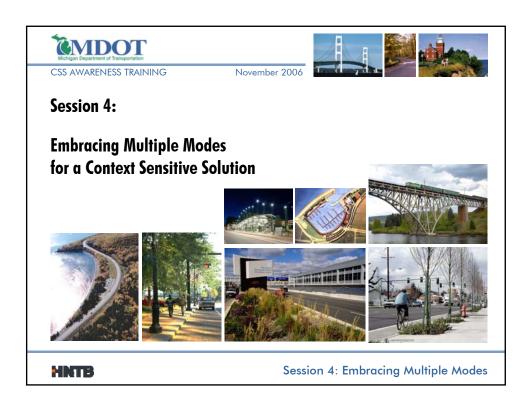
- shares the vision
- enhances credibility and establishes rapport with stakeholders
- avoids being blind-sided
- reduces re-work
- increases efficiency





Zumbro River Bridge, Mantorville, MN

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Attributes of a Multi-Modal Transportation System

- Expands modal choices for a wider range of users;
- Decreases adverse impacts to the environment and society;
- Enhances mobility and access;
- Better balances costs and benefits?





Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes





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Integrating Multiple Modes

What has your community done to integrate multimodal solutions into its transportation network?



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Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes



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Integrating Multiple Modes

- Driving
- Walking
- Bicycling
- **Public Transit**
- **Rail Transportation**
- Air Transportation
- Water Transportation



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Embracing Multiple Modes Driving

- Primary mode of transportation in US and Michigan
- Very flexible. Wide range of road, vehicle, and trip types. Tailored scheduling
- Relatively expensive. Restricted to those who have access to vehicles
- Contributes significantly to adverse environmental impacts



Columbia River Gorge Scenic Byway, OR

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Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes



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Embracing Multiple Modes Walking

- Typically, the beginning and ending mode for all trips, requiring coordination with all other modes
- Trips typically under ½ mile or even ¼ mile
- Paved surfaces typically preferred
- Spatial requirements determined by safety and comfort rather than capacity



Cincinnati, OH

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Embracing Multiple ModesBicycling

- Viable alternative to motorized vehicles, subject to seasonal constraints in some locations
- Wide range of skills and abilities adults to children—with a wide range of motivations—commuting to recreation
- Predictable origins and destinations but unpredictable behavior—may disregard traffic management rules



Lansing, MI

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Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes



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Embracing Multiple Modes

Public Transit

- Wide range of types (BRT, Bus, LRT, Commuter Rail)
- Specific demographics
- Requires corridor and nodal density
- Infrastructure and operational costs typically subsidized
- Requires integration with other modes



LRT station, Minneapolis, MN

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Embracing Multiple ModesRail Transportation

- Includes both intercity freight and passenger
- Passenger stations must be integrated with other modes, preferably located in CBD or other high-density nodes
- Inter-modal freight facilities must be coordinated with highways and the final destination of freight





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Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes



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Embracing Multiple ModesAir Transportation

- Provide for both passengers and cargo
- Provide wayfinding between airport and major destinations
- Create a convenient and understandable landside layout
- Gateway fosters community identity



Pellston Airport, MI



Cherry Capital Airport, Traverse City, MI

Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes



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Embracing Multiple ModesWater Transportation

- Accommodate wide range of public and private watercraft for commuting and recreation
- As a gateway to community, establishes community identity
- Ferries provides alternative transportation to driving
- May require motor vehicle and boat storage facilities





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Session 4: Embracing Multiple Modes



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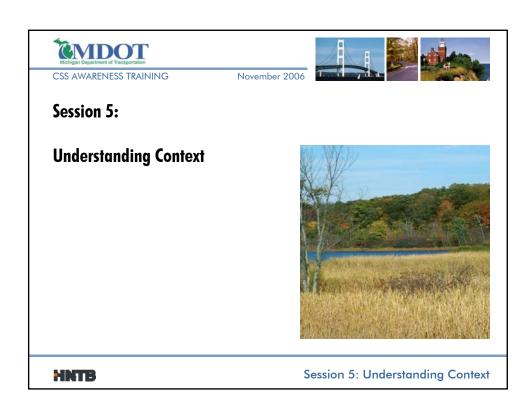


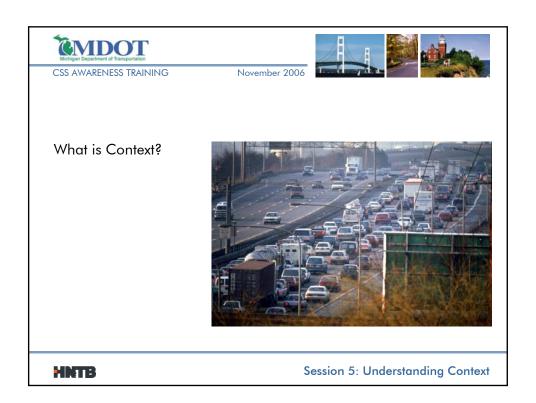
Conclusion

Embracing Multiple Modes

- A network of multi-modal choices is essential for an efficient transportation system and a vibrant community, balancing impacts, costs, and benefits
- Prior to specific project development, the identification by the community of its multi-modal network is helpful
- Share your knowledge with other stakeholders
- Do not assume other partners are familiar with the community's vision or comprehensive plan

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Natural Environment

+ Social Environment

= Context

The natural and social landscapes adjacent to the highway are the context of the transportation project.



US-131, Grand Rapids, MI

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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Natural Environment

- + Social Environment
- + Stakeholders
- = Value of the Context

What people value is critical to determining what needs to be considered as part of the transportation project.



US-131, Grand Rapids, MI

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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"There are many landscapes without highways.
There are no highways without landscapes."

Lynn Lynwood, ASLA
 MDOT Landscape Architect



I-94, St. Paul, MN

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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Understanding Context

What is the legal context?

- Natural and built environments
- Social, economic, environmental
- Specific protected resources









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Understanding Context

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

- Applies to all federally funded projects
- Requires a review of *impacts*
- Requires a review of alternatives



Ames Lake wetland restoration St. Paul, MN

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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Understanding Context

What is an impact?

Any change in existing conditions

- Adverse or beneficial changes
- Major or minor changes
- Widespread or localized changes
- Long-term or short-term changes

Adverse impacts require avoidance, minimization, reduction, mitigation, or compensation



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Understanding Context What is an alternative?

- No-build alternative
- Build alternatives
- Operational alternatives
- Preferred alternative



North Shore Scenic Byway, MN

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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Environmental Review of Impacts and Alternatives

- Categorical Exclusions (CE) 90% of MDOT Work Projects not causing significant impacts. Typically 3R Projects.
- Environmental Assessments (EA) 5% of MDOT Work Discovery process to explore impacts, which may be significant (EIS) or not significant (FONSI).
- Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) 5 % of MDOT Work Significant impacts expected from large and complex projects. Typically 4R Projects.

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Minor Projects

Resurfacing, Restoration, Rehabilitation

- Preserves a transportation function
- Improves mobility, safety, capacity
- Alternatives more constrained working with inches!
- · Mitigating impacts more constrained
- · Design flexibility required





US-23 drawbridge, Cheboygan, MI

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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Major Projects

Reconstruction on Existing Alignment Original Construction on New Alignment

- Improves mobility, safety, capacity
- Adds a transportation function
- Alternatives less constrained working with hundreds of feet or even miles!!!
- Mitigating impacts less constrained
- Design flexibility required less often





I-94/US-24 Wayne County, MI

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CSS and Environmental Review: A Common Approach

- Requires collaborative and interdisciplinary teams
- Engages stakeholders
- Addresses and minimizes conflicts
- Employs transparent decisionmaking processes
- Balances mobility and safety with environmental issues



River Trail, Lansing, MI

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Session 5: Understanding Context



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Conclusion — Environmental Review as a CSS Tool

Environmental Review and CSS complement each other to plan, develop, and deliver transportation projects that benefit both communities and the natural environment.



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Session 6:

Using Design Flexibility to Achieve Context Sensitive Solutions

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Session 6: Using Design Flexibility



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Design Flexibility

Introduction

National standards dependent on local design factors such as:

- Roadway classification
- Terrain
- Traffic volumes
- Traffic composition



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Session 6: Using Design Flexibility



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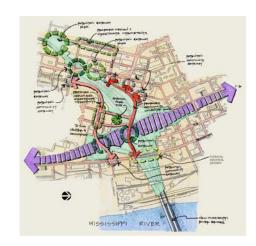


Classification

A roadway's classification determines the range of design flexibility allowed.

Classification is a judgment, yet not arbitrary.

Changing the classification may create more flexibility but it also may have trade-offs.



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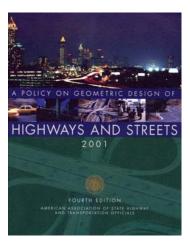


Classification

Within a classification there is a range of values.

Typically, only the most conservative values are used; the whole range is rarely used.

Finding out why can lead to greater flexibility while maintaining safety and mobility.



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Session 6: Using Design Flexibility





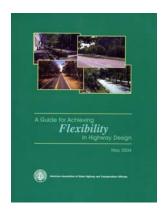
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Design Flexibility

AASHTO Guidelines

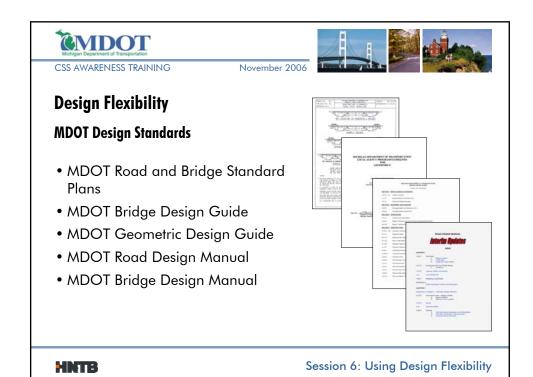
Several AASHTO publications are useful to a CSS designer including:

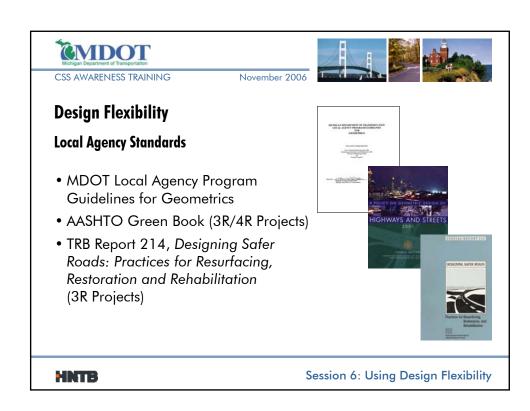
- A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (Green Book)
- A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design
- A Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities

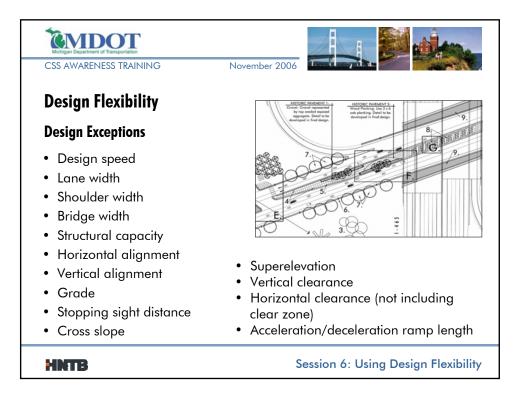


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Tort Liability

Input from State Attorney General's Office

- Project scoping and design
- Governmental immunity
- Previous opinions involving design

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Session 6: Using Design Flexibility



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Conclusion

- Design flexibility is available
- Practicing design flexibility is using good engineering judgment
- Practicing design flexibility will not increase an agency's or an employee's exposure to liability as CSS is practiced.
- Safety influences flexibility



M-119, Emmet County, MI

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Session 6: Using Design Flexibility



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Session 7:

Applying Context Sensitive Solutions



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Session 7: Applying CSS



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Shared Responsibilities

A successful CSS program will require **mutual commitment** on the part of both transportation agencies and stakeholders to identify appropriate opportunities to plan, develop, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure in accordance with CSS principles without undue costs or scheduling burdens.

- MDOT CSS Policy

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Partnerships Takes Many Forms

Help identify unique community aspects

- What is...
- What was...
- What could be...

Share burdens and benefits through partnering

Promote involvement by stakeholders

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Partnerships Take Many Forms

- Financial contributions
- Land exchanges
- Maintenance agreements
- Sharing of expertise
- Collective experiments
- Volunteers



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Financial Contributions

The City of Taylor and the Detroit Regional Gateway Advisory Group help pay for the difference in cost for the modified tied arch bridge



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US-10 and Eastman Road Interchange in Midland

- Early coordination
- Attention to Midland's Master Plan
- MDOT a stakeholder on city's entryway committee
- Partnerships forged



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Park and Ride Lot in Midland





Private investments and exchange of property facilitated the construction of this carpool lot with bus stop.

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Sharing Expertise

MDOT provided the design for a privatelyfunded non-motorized facility in Midland.





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Innovative Approach

Cold milling and resurfacing of existing pavement

Community skeptical that a 3-lane road would be safer and more efficient than a 4-lane road. Community allowed stripping of 3-lane after MDOT assured the community the roadway would be re-striped as four lanes if they were unhappy with the new configuration.



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Session 7: Applying CSS



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Volunteers





Master Gardeners have partnered with MDOT and the Genesee County Road Commission to design, install, and maintain annual flower displays at rest areas along I-75 and US-23.

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Measurement

How can we — how should we — measure success?



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Measurement

- Functional Appropriateness
- Community Support
- Environmental Compliance
- Financial Feasibility
- Social and Economic Progress



I-465, Indianapolis, IN

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Conclusion: CSS is Beneficial

- Functional Appropriateness Improved safety, mobility, and access
- Community Support Better public, regulatory, and political support for projects and transportation
- **Environmental Compliance** Enhanced environmental quality
- Financial Feasibility Superior cost-benefit ratio
- Social and Economic Progress Increased quality of life indicators





Watkins Memorial Drive, Kansas City

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Session 7: Applying CSS



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Conclusion: CSS Works

St. Croix Trail CSAH Highway 21 Washington County, Minnesota

- Let neighbors define issues, goals, and scope of project
- On-site meetings and adjustments to alignment as it was staked
- Aesthetic treatments mimicked rustic architecture from nearby state park
- Shoulder accommodate bicycle traffic
- Corrected only locations with crash history





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Summary

What one idea will you use from today's session to change how you conduct your business?

Please write a one paragraph personal action plan based on what you've learned today.



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Session 7: Applying CSS



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